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THE TAOS BLUE LAKE CEREMONY[1]

John J. Bodine

THERE ARE VERY FEW MAJOR CEREMONIES performed by the Indian tribes of North America that have not been thoroughly described and analyzed by anthropologists and others in the over 100 years of scientific research on the Native Americans of the United States. However, the Blue Lake Ceremony of the Taos Pueblo Indians of New Mexico stands out as heretofore never receiving public exposure. This is all the more ironic given the 65-year battle this tribe waged to have Blue Lake and its surrounding mountain lands returned to the Taos Reservation, finally accomplished by an act of Congress and the signature of President Nixon in 1971.[2] In all those years the Taos have never revealed what transpired at Blue Lake, even though some outsiders argued it might have helped their cause. This paper constitutes the first published account and analysis of the Blue Lake Ceremony, and attempts to document the importance of Blue Lake to the continuance of traditional Taos Pueblo culture.

BACKGROUND

Blue Lake and the mountains around it were incorporated into the Carson National Forest by the order of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906, coincidentally the same year that Matilda Cox Stevenson went to Taos to conduct fieldwork. In the process she collected what is apparently the only detailed and reliable account of the annual August pilgrimage of the Taos people to Blue Lake. Her fieldnotes ultimately were obtained by J.P. Harrington. Harrington worked on Stevenson's manuscripts and particularly focused his attention on the Taos language terms incorporated in the narrative. He presumably intended to publish the Stevenson material under his own authorship since the original, now kept in the National Anthropological Archives of the Smithsonian, clearly shows that he scratched through Stevenson's name and put his own on the manuscript. Stevenson's work on Taos was not discovered until 1965, yet it will become apparent that what she collected 80 years ago is one of the most valuable sets of documents that we have on Taos Pueblo.

The Taos Indians justly have the reputation for being one of the most secretive and conservative Pueblos in New Mexico, and this is especially apparent in terms of their reticence to cooperate with an-

thropologists. One can still count on less than two hands the number of anthropologists who have been able to collect information of any lasting value at Taos, and some of those engaged in one or perhaps two field experiences and then moved on to more hospitable situations. Only two, Matilda Coxe Stevenson and Elsie Clews Parsons were able to break down the barriers of secrecy sufficiently to obtain information on the Blue Lake Ceremony. John Collier, Sr., wrote about his 1926 trip to Blue Lake, but, as I will explain, the impressions he left are very misleading.

It is significant that Stevenson went to Taos in 1906. Secrecy was even then the watchword at the Pueblo. This was also the case when a graduate student from the University of Chicago, Merton Miller, visited Taos in the summer of 1898 to gather data for his doctoral dissertation in anthropology.[3] However, the people at the Pueblo were more cooperative in Stevenson's time than was to be the case in later years. Stevenson's principal informant was Venturo Romero, then head of Big Earring kiva and therefore one of the most knowledgeable and politically influential people at Taos, which in no way detracts from what this intrepid pioneer of American anthropology accomplished.

In decided contrast, Elsie Clews Parsons first saw Taos Pueblo in 1922, the year that effectively dates the beginning of the incredible assault on Native American religions. Parsons returned in 1931 to begin her fieldwork at Taos, which culminated in the publication of *Taos Pueblo* in 1936. It is no wonder, given the dates of her work, that the lid of secrecy was shut even more securely. Parsons gathered only the briefest amount of information on Blue Lake, and she freely admitted that she guessed about some of it.[4] Parsons' opinion of Stevenson's abilities as an ethnographer, however, is very clear: "Matilda Stevenson, who usually failed to distinguish between what she saw and what she heard about, was far from being an accurate recorder, nor did she have any facility for interpretation or evaluation."[5]

As stated, 1922 marked the beginning of the persecution of many American Indian tribes that had continued to practice aspects of their indigenous religions. Taos Pueblo, and most particularly Blue Lake, became the target of exceedingly vicious attacks, slanderous accusations, and outright lies. In Taos at the time was one Blanche Grant, a self-styled historian and interpreter of Taos Indian culture. Like most Anglo-Americans who have been drawn to Taos, at least many of the artists and what could have been referred to at the time as the "Bohemian element," presided over by Mabel Dodge Lujan, Blanche Grant considered herself a champion of the Taos Indians. However, she drew the line when it came to the annual ceremony at Blue Lake.

Rumors had persisted for some time that sexual licentiousness, and even total sexual promiscuity occurred at Blue Lake during the August pilgrimage.

Grant published *Taos Indians* in 1925. It was eagerly read by many whose curiosity about Taos Indian culture had been thoroughly frustrated by the unwillingness of the Indians to reveal anything significant about themselves and certainly nothing about Blue Lake. Grant generously fanned the flames of opposition when she wrote:

> It is the one dance to which the so-called reformers have a right to object in the name of fair play for the Indian women. Girls and childless women are forced to go to the mountain. So thoroughly is this against the wish of the Indian women, though long used to the custom, that daughters of the Pueblo, now and then, prefer exile to returning from the government schools and having to submit to this ceremony imposed upon them by the older men.[6]

She then quoted an Anglo, who she said knew the Indians well, "I have seen the girls come back looking like wilted flowers."[7] I too have witnessed the return of the Indians from Blue Lake on a number of occasions. Blue Lake is at an elevation of 11,500 feet, which makes it 4,500 feet into the mountains above Taos Pueblo, and it is 20 miles from the village. It is a very arduous journey even on horseback, and, given that the main body of townspeople have been up for two nights dancing and singing, everyone returns totally exhausted. There is no evidence whatsoever that sexual license in any form is a part of the Blue Lake Ceremony or ever was. In fact, given the religious nature of the pilgrimage, sexual continence is the unstated rule, as it is in so many cultures when religious ritual is performed.

Nevertheless, the hue and cry against what presumably took place at Blue Lake reached a feverish pitch, which is partially why some of the traditionalists at the Pueblo invited John Collier, Sr., and a colleague to accompany them to Blue Lake in 1926. It was thought that if he witnessed the ceremony, he could quell the growing pressure against permitting the Indians to continue to go to Blue Lake at all. In *On the Gleaming Way*, Collier provides a glowing and very florid description of his observations.[8] He emphatically leaves the impression that he witnessed the Blue Lake Ceremony. He did not. He saw the first night's encampment and social dancing by the main party of townspeople. The next morning he was turned back and not allowed to go on to the lake as he would have us believe. At the time, factionalism was rampant at the Pueblo between the traditionalists and the adherents to peyotism. The peyotists objected to Collier's presence and threatened violence.[9] So we are left with only one detailed description of this ceremony, that of Matilda Coxe Stevenson.

There are six kivas active at Taos, within which there are a varying number of kiva societies, not all of which initiate in a manner that requires public validation at Blue Lake in August. Ten societies do engage in initiation rituals that must culminate at Blue Lake, so ten years will pass before the same society will initiate again. Depending on the society, the 8- to 10-year-old male initiates spend 6, 12, or 18 months secluded in their respective kivas with frequent training trips into the mountains behind the Pueblo. They eat and sleep in the kiva and are forbidden any contact with their families or others except their fathers on occasion. The initiation periods are timed so that the training will be completed precisely at the time of the Blue Lake pilgrimage, which indeed is the primary purpose of the trek in the first place. Stevenson's account describes the final eight days of the initiation period for one of the societies in Feather kiva, which is inside the Pueblo wall on the south side. This society initiates for only six months, so the young boys enter the kiva in March and are therefore ready for the final phase of their initiation in August.

STEVENSON'S ACCOUNT OF THE TAOS BLUE LAKE CEREMONY[10]

Taos Lake, also called Pueblo Lake (i.e., Blue Lake), is situated on mòxwóluna mountain (Taos Mountain). There is direct underground communication between three lakes: p'ò'xwìa + lóna or Big Lake (perhaps Star Lake or Bear Lake), the home of kwò + łówna, Old Ax (a Taos kiva); Colorado (Larkspur Lake ?); and Blue Lake, the abiding place of the cloud people, łaciną (kachinas) and the dead. In fact, all sacred waters are connected by underground roads.

The pilgrimage to Blue Lake has direct connection with kiva initiation. There is song practice in the kivas for the five nights immediately preceding the ceremony. Before they leave, the people wash their hair in yucca suds and arrange it. The women wear their hair in two side bows (Hopi side whorls), while the hair of the men is done up in a bow at the back (chignon). The men and women who wish to participate leave the Pueblo about 5 p.m. on August 23rd. The men who go are kiva members. The pǒbtó are included in this privilege. (The pǒbtó is a Feather People kiva society that does not initiate at Blue Lake.)

The people carry food and their finest clothing. They proceed up Taos Canyon (Glorieta Canyon) to a beautiful spot among the cottonwoods on a branch of Taos Creek (Pueblo Creek). Here they spend the night singing and dancing. Before daylight on the morning of August 24th, the people take water from the creek, heat it in native pottery vessels, and drink it as an emetic for bodily purification. The leader

of the party then tells them to discard their ordinary clothing for the finery they have brought along. The men put on leggings of red, blue, or black cloth bordered in white. They wear moccasins. A blanket is wrapped around the loins, and the upper part of the body is left bare. The women wear silk dresses. Some wear as many as four of these dresses at a time. They wear fine white moccasins (Taos boots) and elaborate shawls, many of them of Mexican manufacture.

This main party has been followed by a smaller one that left the Pueblo at sunset on the 23rd. This party is composed of young initiates or religious trainees, certain kiva men who act as escorts, and two young girls. The number of initiates varies, but usually there are only two or three. It is preferred that the girls belong to the phìa + t'óyna, Feather Person (hereafter referred to as Feather People), but if girls of this society cannot be found to take part then others will be substituted. This is frequently done. (There are usually ten adult members of the Feather People.)

The smaller party stops at a place about three miles below the encampment of the larger group. They sing until midnight but do not dance. Then they sleep. Their bedding is a single blanket carried by each. They leave this place at the rising of the morning star, and when they near the encampment of the main party they halt. The men call out "Au, au, au," which is the signal for the villagers to move on to the lake. The main party must not look upon the approaching kiva group at this time.

The kiva group lingers a short while and then proceeds toward Blue Lake, into which the dead descend into the nether worlds. They head for a spot that is beyond the one toward which the main party is journeying. The two places are about two miles apart and separated by a mountain ridge. Before they reach the lake they stop at a spring which is about a half-mile from the lake itself. An Indian who visited this spring at the time of his initiation, about 1866, said that at that time a great noise emanated from the opening in the earth. It was caused by the sound of corn being ground below. Every ten years since that time he has visited this spot, but the noise has become less and less. When he first went there the water rushed from the earth in torrents. Now it comes out very quietly. He says the reason is that the women corn grinders below have become very old. As a result the water is not happy and does not rush out in joy. The women grinders below are called 'o + łiwéna, Grindstone Women.

The two young girls with the kiva party stop at this spring and grind cornmeal, which they will carry to the lake and offer to the cloud people. The girls are referred to as 'o + kwàléna, Grindstone Maiden. Indeed, the women of the main party also will make offerings

of wild turkey plumes, sacred meal, or bits of turquoise in the lake to the women grinders below. The offerings are made that they will be given strength without becoming fatigued and for all things to wear. The Taos men make similar offerings and pray to the women grinders that they will intercede with the rainmakers that the earth may abound with crops and showers. They also ask these women for success in the hunt and for the skins of buffalo, deer, and other animals, for they are the mothers or keepers of all game. Game would not appear if they did not wish it.

The kiva group then proceeds to Blue Lake, where they pray for corn, beans, squash, and the many kinds of large and small game. Only native food is asked for. They request buffalo robes and all other valuable skins. They pray that the earth may be made beautiful to look upon and that she may be made fruitful by the rainmakers. They pray that they may be blessed with many children who will grow to be strong. They also ask that the men may be brave and the women able to grind corn and do other work.

The young kiva initiates wear buckskin shirts that reach below their knees. These shirts are sometimes made especially for the occasion. They wear leggings as well. The initiates remove their moccasins, made for them the previous March. Placing wild turkey feathers and sacred meal offerings into each moccasin, beginning with the one for the right foot, they cast them into the lake with prayers to kwò+łówna, Old Ax, and to the moon and sun gods. The initiates offer these sacrifices with anxiety and fear, for if the moccasins fail to sink at once, the heart of the initiate is not good. The lack of purity is indicated by the length of time the moccasin remains on the surface of the water.

The kiva men and the initiates then bathe in the lake wearing only their breech clouts. They sit down in the water until it reaches the neck. The young girls also bathe. Each girl wears a white *camisa* (blouse) and after bathing puts on another one which she brought with her. The wet *camisa* is thrown over the shoulders shawl fashion until it dries. Then it is carried over the arm. Everyone drinks water from the lake by lifting it in their hands. The initiates put on another pair of moccasins which they have been carrying in a bundle tied around the waist.

After the kiva party has bathed, they return to the spring, where the two young girls arrange each other's hair into side bows. They then arrange the hair of the initiates and the kiva men. Sometimes it happens that only one girl accompanies the kiva party. In this case a man will arrange her hair. With their hair properly fixed, the kiva group proceeds to the place where the main group of villagers is

waiting. On reaching the summit of the ridge that separates them, the men again shout, "Au, au, au." This is the signal for the people to be ready to receive them. Continuing their shouts, the kiva group runs toward the main party. They stop shouting when they reach the villagers, pass beyond them, and go partly around the lake.

The men of the larger party are standing in a circle. In this circle there are two drummers who hold small pottery drums in their left hands and beat them with single drumsticks. The women of this group also are gathered together. The kiva party forms a line extending from east to west. The head of the Feather People stands at the west end of the line. The two young girls position themselves midway in the line. Each woman in the larger party has a Jicarilla basket containing *pinole* (corn gruel). These baskets are made watertight by spreading dry *pinole* over them, sprinkling them with water, and allowing the paste to dry. Each woman wears a wreath of wildflowers and carries a great quantity of flowers in her left hand. The flowers were gathered and the wreaths made on the journey to the lake. Each woman gives to every person in the line, beginning with the head of the Feather People at the west end, a drink of *pinole* from her basket. They hold the baskets up to the lips of the drinker. They also give to each some of the other food which they carry. The women remove the flower wreaths from their heads and place them on the heads of such men as they desire. They also place flowers in the men's left hands. Sometimes a man is crowned with as many as three wreaths.

After all the women pass before the kiva group, the men who have been singing in the circle also pass in file before the kiva line beginning at the opposite end from that where the women began. Then all the people gather behind the kiva group and load them with still more flowers. The flowers are tied in bunches by the women to be carried home by the owner. Sometimes a woman will tie wreaths to the man's shoulders, since he has been favored with so many that they are too heavy for his head. One is worn on the head, however, and the others may be carried in the hand. The kiva group, having partaken of the *pinole* and other food and loaded with flowers, now starts the journey back toward the Pueblo.

The main group proceeds on around the lake, some going to the right and others to the left. They meet on the opposite shore, where they dance and sing most of the night. They sleep until the appearance of the morning star and then set out for the village. Unless some of the women tire and are compelled to rest, they make no stops on the way. They return to the Pueblo and go to their homes without further ceremony.

The kiva group, having descended from the lake, camps some distance from the Pueblo and sleeps until early dawn of August 25th.

They rise and proceed to within about three miles of the Pueblo and here await the rising of the sun. When the sun is up they run all the way to the Pueblo. The people in the village, especially the wives and parents of the pilgrims, are out to see their return. All then go to their own homes, where food is served. The initiate eats only native food and sits apart from his family while he eats, although he takes his food at the same time. The fathers of the initiates are not restricted to any particular kind of food.

After the meal, all of the kiva people who made the pilgrimage, the initiates and the two young girls, proceed about two miles up Taos canyon, where all pluck out their facial hair (including the eyebrows). The initiates do this for the first time. The kiva people pluck their facial hair, too, and therefore everything is considered to be an initiation into the kiva, which is every ten years. The plucking is done with the index fingers and the thumbs. Both hands are used at the same time, and piñon gum is rubbed on the fingers and thumbs for the purpose. It is a simple matter to extract hair by this process. The gum makes the hair readily grasped. Every hair must be removed from the face. The extracted hair is deposited in a heap on a spot of ground that has been made beautifully smooth by moistening the earth and patting the ground. A man makes an excavation to the depth of his elbow. He loosens the earth with a stick and removes it with his hand. Into this hole he places the hair, and deposits sacred meal. A stone is then used to carefully cover the sacred burial place.

The hair and meal are offered to pǫ̀'óne (earth), Mother Earth, with the following prayer: "We pray for long years and good health. We wish to be strong and work as kwò+łówna (Old Ax), the Creator, directed. May we have many sons, may we have many daughters. May we have much corn and other food that our children may be strong." Prayers are never offered for money, as the people are instructed not to love money or to desire it. This would degrade the heart of the sun.

When the man has made this offering, everyone eats food which has been brought to this place by certain village women before the kiva group arrived. All of the food must be native and there must be deer meat. For this reason the Indians pay little attention to the game laws when such an occasion demands wild food. After eating, the group returns to the village and the initiate and his father work on making the initiate's moccasins and leggings. The initiates return to their kiva just after dark, where they spend the night of August 25th.

On the morning of the 26th, the initiate goes to his home to eat. He is still restricted to native foods. Later in the day the kiva people and the initiates return to the place where they plucked their facial

hair. All trim their hair across the forehead to a level just below the lower eyelid. Scissors are presently used, but originally the hair was cut with stone knives. The individual would hold his hair portion by portion while sawing it off with the stone knife. The hair is then deposited with that which was plucked out the previous day, and the head of the Feather People later places all the hair on a corn husk. The corn husk is the companion to the hair plucked or cut from the head. This man will direct one of his associates to carry the husk to a shrine dedicated for this purpose. It is a short distance up the hill from the spot where the hair is collected.

The initiates sleep in the kiva the night of August 26th and the next morning (August 27th) they breakfast in their homes and their hair is arranged by their fathers. Then they go hunting for the Blanding's finch (known today as the green-tailed towhee). These finches are killed by striking them with long willow sticks. The initiates are accompanied by members of the Feather People.

On August 28th the initiates again have their hair arranged by their fathers and go up the canyon alone, where they sing to the moon and sun father, kwò+łówna (Old Ax) and pǫ̀'óne (earth), Mother Earth, for rains that the earth may be fructified and made beautiful to look upon. The initiates sleep that night in the kiva.

On the 29th of August the novices, accompanied by a young man of the kwòtwò+t'óyna (Old Ax person), ascend to the summit of a p'ìanénemą (mountain), a peak to the east of Taos Pueblo. Prayer plumes are deposited among the rocks on the summit of the peak. The group returns to the village at noon, and the initiates eat in their homes. Only native food is consumed, and after the meal their hair is arranged once more by their fathers. The initiates then go to the kiva.

At sunset on the 29th, the cacique stands on the south side of the river within the walls of the village. He announces to the head of the Feather People that the initiates will leave the kiva at the rising of the morning star. When the star ascends over the horizon, the initiates leave the kiva carrying their bedding and other belongings, which they take to their homes. Then they hasten to a spot on the river a short distance above the village and sing while they wait for the rising of the sun. When the sun is well up, as the Indians say, the fathers of the initiates arrange their hair and the initiates bathe in the river.

The novices then proceed to the house of the ceremonial father. There is only one man who is the ceremonial father of all the novices. He is most probably the leader or head of their kiva. Arriving at his house, the initiates take seats against the wall on the far side of the room. All members of the Feather People are present. The ceremonial

father goes into an inner room and returns with a small buckskin bag. He passes before the novices, beginning at the left of the line, and places a pinch of medicine in the mouth of each. The initiate chews it, spits it into the palm of his hand, and then rubs it over his body and limbs. Each initiate wears only moccasins, a breech clout, and a finely dressed buffalo, elk, or deerskin robe.

The ceremonial father again returns to the inner room and brings out a small piece of wheat bread. He places a pinch in the mouth of each initiate, which signifies that when the body was rubbed by the medicine the long fast was over and foreign food can be taken. An elaborate feast is furnished by the ceremonial father. It is prepared by his wife, a family of the hǫlt'óyna (shell person), and the women of the Feather People. One of the initiates on this occasion was the real son of the ceremonial leader.

After this feast the initiates and the men of the Feather People go to the home of the second novice, where another feast is held. Feasts will be given in turn in the homes of each initiate. The number of feasts will depend on the number of initiates.

The feasting was no sooner completed than the rain began, indicating that the rainmakers were happy. The people rejoiced. When each feast was finished, the initiate who belonged to the particular household was dressed in the beautiful buckskin garments which he and his father made.

This concludes the narrative presented by Stevenson.

VERIFICATION AND CHANGE

I discovered this manuscript in the summer of 1965, only days after it had been moved from the old Bureau of American Ethnology, and took a copy of it to Taos for verification. I was impressed with its completeness and the significant amount of detail it contained. Given what I already knew of Taos culture, I was reasonably certain that it was largely an accurate account. My consultants at the Pueblo verified it as a true description of the Blue Lake Ceremony, but it would have been professional suicide in 1965, as far as work at Taos was concerned, for me to have made the matter public, so I did not. In 1975, while on sabbatical leave in Taos, I checked the manuscript with yet other informants, who also agreed to its accuracy, and finally in 1981 I went over it once more, this time with an adult member of Feather kiva. While he would not submit to detailed questioning as the others had, he said in typical Taos fashion, "Yes, that's what they do. I believe it is all true." Therefore, Stevenson's account has been checked three times over a period of some twenty years with knowledgeable informants at the Pueblo, and while not all agreed with each other in every detail, there is general concurrence that Stevenson received an accurate description of what transpired at Blue Lake at the turn of the century and still occurs today. I do not mean to leave the impression that I suspected at the time that there was a degree of fabrication in the account or, more probably, as has happened often at Taos, that Stevenson was told what she wanted to hear; rather I was mainly concerned with the question of change. Has there been truly significant change in the Blue Lake Ceremony since 1906? The answer is largely no.

In the following discussion of change, if a particular aspect of the ceremony is not addressed, it has been verified as having remained the same. This is not to say that every detail has been confirmed, e.g., no one would comment one way or another as to whether the kiva initiates and their sponsors go out on August 27th to hunt the green-tailed towhee, but then such an activity would be society-specific. This brings up an important point to consider, since there are ten different societies that initiate. There are differences in the training the initiates receive, so the hunting of the finches may be a special activity restricted to the Feather People. But generally what occurs in the closing days of the young boys' initiation is the same for all.

My consultants stated that the townspeople no longer wash their hair in yucca suds, and whether the women arrange their hair in side whorls and the men in a chignon will depend on either personal preference or, as is frequently the case today, whether their hair is long enough to effect either style. The people dress in their finest clothes before leaving the Pueblo and not after the first night's encampment as Stevenson was told. This I have witnessed personally.

A change that some of the older Indians felt was detrimental to the proper performance of the ritual by the townspeople is the use of horses. Stevenson makes no mention of the larger body traveling on horseback to Blue Lake. I strongly suspect that in her day they went on foot, as indeed the initiates' party has always done. Both Collier and Parsons were aware of the use of horses by the main body of townspeople, but they were told, and my informants agreed, that this was not the "old way." The older people indicated that this was a fairly recent innovation, i.e., a relaxation of the rules. In fact, Parsons was told:

> Formerly at the first spring near the lake people used to hear the sound of grinding below the water. The sound is heard no longer, because the people travel on horseback, not caring enough about their pilgrimage to go painfully afoot as they once did.[11]

My informants were split over the matter of this spring. The younger ones insisted that there was no such place and, while the kiva group did perform rituals apart from the main group, a spring was not involved. The older people were more hesitant. They said they didn't know whether such a spring had figured in the ritual in the old days, but they were sure that it was no longer important. The point could be made at any time that Taos religion is so structured that much of religious observance is deemed the knowledge and property of particular societies and individuals. Too frequently investigators of Pueblo culture will report that their informants never heard about such and such a ritual. Of course they hadn't. They could not have heard about it, because it is carefully guarded by those who possess it and have been trained in its performance. Therefore, it is dangerous to suppose that a particular ritual did not or does not exist on the basis of the limited knowledge of one informant, or even a few. I am inclined to accept what Stevenson was told about the spring and the grindstone women below, mythological though it may be, but it may be an aspect of the ceremony that has faded over the years.

Of great importance to the question of change is the emphasis placed again and again on separating what is deemed "Indian" and "foreign." This emphasis would hardly have been made in aboriginal times, yet today it is very important to correct performance. The kiva initiates throughout the training period and up to the very last day, when they are medicinally cleansed, are not permitted to eat any food that is the result of European contact, such as wheat bread. It is significant that the Taos have kept alive the recognition of what is theirs and what they borrowed or were forced to accept from their conquerors. In terms of kiva initiation, this distinction has become a central theme of the ritual complex.

Proper attire, on the other hand, is a curious mixture of what is considered aboriginal and what has been accepted from the outside. The silk dresses and shawls of Mexican provenience, actually the fringed and embroidered "Indian" shawls of today, are worn and certainly constitute foreign elements. The men do not bare the upper parts of their bodies any more. The people do not heat water and drink it as an emetic. The main group does not leave the Pueblo in a body. Most go at about the same time, but others can join them later. On the way the people still gather flowers that they fashion into wreaths or carry as bundles in their hands. These flowers are given, as Stevenson stated, to men of the women's choice and to the kiva party. They are still brought back to the Pueblo, where they are proudly displayed in the person's home until they have wilted. There are other obvious acculturational effects, although they are minor, e.g., the use

of scissors for cutting the hair instead of stone knives and the employment of Jicarilla baskets, which is an obvious case of intertribal loan. The Taos were never producers of basketry. As nearly as can be determined, everything else that Stevenson was able to elicit remains the same.

Prior to the assault on the Blue Lake Ceremony that began in 1922, the Indians were much more comfortable with their actions. The effects of that assault led them to be much stricter in terms of who would be permitted to go to Blue Lake. No outsiders, of course, but also firmer restrictions on even who at the Pueblo could participate. No one without kiva training is permitted. Guards are placed on the trail to Blue Lake to exclude any tribal member who is not initiated or is not closely related to a kiva member from proceeding to the lake. The consumption of alcoholic beverages is absolutely forbidden, and the contention by Grant that young girls and childless women are forced to go to Blue Lake is without any foundation. They would not have been permitted in most cases. Hence, it would appear somewhat ironic that attendance at the Blue Lake Ceremony, which constitutes one of the most important religious rituals in Taos culture, has become so restrictive. Normally, only about 150 out of a total resident population of approximately 1,000 will go to Blue Lake in any given year. This excludes the very young and the very old, the uninitiated, all who have married out of the Pueblo, and anyone who is at odds with the traditional governing structure.

Another factor that has contributed to a lack of yearly participation by the eligible is the shift to wage work. Certain Indians cannot go because they would lose their jobs in the Taos area or elsewhere if they did. Finally, going to Blue Lake is often determined by which kiva society is initiating. If your people are initiating you will make the effort to go, but if another kiva is involved you will feel less of an obligation. However, none of the above qualifications in any way lessens the importance of Blue Lake to Taos Pueblo.

CONCLUSION

The importance of Blue Lake is critical to Taos culture. First, it is the source of the water that flows through the Pueblo and therefore the source of life. It has been used for drinking, cooking, and the watering of livestock, gardens and fields for hundreds of years. Moreover, it symbolizes the integrity and unity of the tribe, thus it is at the very core of what remains traditional. To be able to go to Blue Lake in August a man must have been initiated as a young boy. To be initiated into one of the kivas at Taos qualifies that person for possible secular

political office later in life and ultimately religious leadership in the kiva organization, hence the road to status and prestige is open only to those who endured the lengthy rites of initiation as young boys and, for most, enjoyed the closing rituals of validation at Blue Lake.

The Blue Lake Ceremony is both rich in symbolism and beautiful in its simplicity. Given the renaissance that has occurred among so many American Indian tribes to preserve or revive elements of their indigenous cultures, or at least that which they believe to be their old ways, it is safe to say that Blue Lake and the annual August pilgrimage are even more important to the preservation of Taos culture now than at certain times in the past. As long as young boys continue to be initiated in the kivas at Taos and ritually bathe in the incredibly blue waters of their sacred lake, certain crucial lifelines of Taos culture will endure.

For whatever failings or shortcomings she might have had, Matilda Coxe Stevenson is to be applauded for what she was able to obtain at Taos. She may not have been the equal of Elsie Clews Parsons in terms of analytical and evaluative skills, but as an ethnographer she was excellent and properly joins the ranks of those few women in the early days of American anthropology who truly contributed to the advancement of the discipline.

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NOTES

1. I am indebted to Dr. Herman Viola, archivist, and his staff of the National Anthropological Archives of the Smithsonian for their cooperation in making the Stevenson manuscript available. Fieldwork in 1975–76 was made possible by a postdoctoral degree grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. To all those at Taos Pueblo who aided in the process of verification, I am most grateful.

2. John J. Bodine, "Taos Blue Lake Controversy," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 6, Spring 1978:42–49.

3. Merton L. Miller, *Preliminary Study of the Pueblo of Taos*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1898.

4. Elsie Clews Parsons, *Taos Pueblo*. Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta, 1936, pp. 98–100.

5. Elsie Clews Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939, p. 939.

6. Blanche C. Grant, *Taos Indians*. Taos, New Mexico: By the Author, 1925, p. 103.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

8. John Collier, Sr., *On the Gleaming Way*. Denver: Sage Books, 1962, pp. 124–28.

9. John J. Bodine, "Attitudes and Institutions of Taos, New Mexico: Variables for Value System Expression." Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1967, pp. 216–19.

10. I have retained Stevenson's wording throughout the narrative, but have substituted a few terms current in her day with those now in use, e.g., she uses the Spanish *estufa* (oven) when referring to a kiva. I have used the latter. Anything that appears in parenthesis is my insertion. Finally, I must thank Dr. George Trager, who generously gave of his time to transcribe the Taos language terms that Stevenson collected into his own more accurate system of linguistic notation.

11. Parsons, 1936, p. 100.